

1 July 1989
Layton, Utah

Dr. Green:

Enclosed is a zerox copy of the magazine article which I wrote some time ago. It is basically correct, but of course does not contain every bit of the court proceedings, which the average reader would not want to know. I read all of the court records on his murder at Red Creek as well as the killing of Olds at Manti. I couldn't readily locate the old magazine article on the Hilliard Flume, but have enclosed a rough draft of it. Somewhere I have some photos of the flume, or at least the remains of it.

If you should write up any information on the graves you have been researching, I would like to obtain a copy. I have quite a few photos of lone graves in the mountains, but not necessarily in this area, some being from other states or places. Thanks again for allowing me to accompany you on the trip to Lightning Ridge!

With Best Wishes,



George A. Thompson

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...most of these documents were written in the vernacular language, though with some English, and had to return it to the original form and to the local situation according to the original language. It was the only opportunity to read the original documents and to understand the local situation.

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Rough Draft

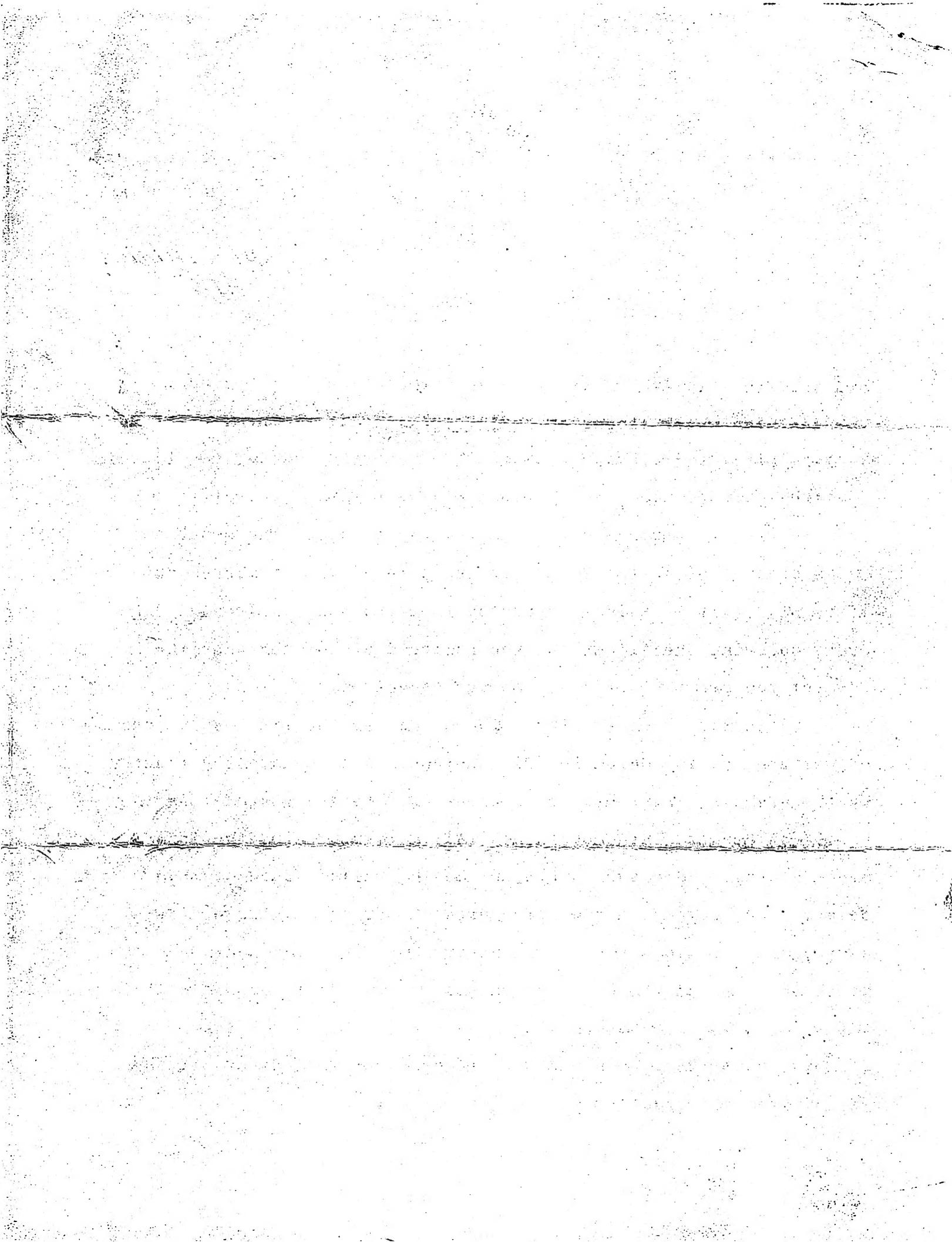
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in Uintah
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THE GREAT HILLIARD FLUME

During the 1870's the wild unmapped Utah-Wyoming border country was the scene of the west's most unusual logging operation. As the rails of the Union Pacific Railroad were pushed ever further into the western deserts, the problem of obtaining cross-ties for the heavy rails became more and more troublesome. The mountains which separated the two future states were heavily timbered but miles of desert wasteland separated them from the railroad. In order to bring the timber and the railroad closer together, the idea of the great Hilliard Flume was conceived.

While laying their steel ribbons across the treeless wastes of western Wyoming, Union Pacific engineers were constantly taunted by the sight of great stands of timber far to the south along the crests of Utah's Uinta Mountains. All across Wyoming the forests stood distant and inaccessible, but as the rails turned southward toward Echo Canyon, the mountains drew nearer and timber cruisers were sent to explore them. The reports they brought back gave birth to three of the west's strangest and wildest camps. Mill City was a rough lumber camp, Hilliard was a sawmill town miles from the forests, while Bear Town was the toughest and wildest of all the end of line railroad camps.



Advance parties of loggers had explored the north slope of the Uinta's and were cutting timber as early as 1867, but it was not until the following year, as the advancing railroad approached the future site of Evanston, Wyoming, that timbering on a large scale began. For the first time the virgin stands of lodgepole pine and Engelmann spruce at the head waters of the Bear River felt the bite of the woodsmen's axe. Through the winter of 1867, tie-hackers cut and trimmed railroad ties on the windswept 11,000' peaks, waiting for the high water floods of early spring to float them to the desert valleys below where the railroad route was being graded. The spring runoff came on schedule, carrying along great numbers of ties in its foaming fury, but thousands were left high and dry as the flood waters subsided, and two men had been drowned in the swollen river. A more dependable and safer way of moving ties to the railroad was needed and in answer to the problem came W.K. Sloan.

Sloan proposed construction of a giant flume to carry ties and sawlogs from the forests to the railroad. To build a flume for so great a distance seemed almost like madness to the railroad workers, and they jeeringly called his idea "Sloan's Folly"! Undaunted by their ridicule, Sloan organized the Hilliard Flume & Lumber Company, and began construction of his great flume in 1872. It cost \$200,000 to build and although the rails of the Union Pacific had joined those of the Central Pacific before its completion, still it carried countless millions of railroad ties, sawlogs, mine props, and lengths of cordwood.

The flume was built in the shape of a "V" with sides 30" deep, of whip-sawed planks 12" wide and 3" thick. And when it was finished

it was 30 miles long! Most of its length snaked across dry sage covered flats where no timber larger than a stunted Aspen grew, but Sloan had planned his flume well. High on the crest of Gold Hill near the head-waters of a branch of Hayden's Fork of the Bear River, which would soon be known as Mill City Creek, he built a sawmill and a diversion dam to turn the creek's water into the flume. As the flume lengthened, lumber for its construction was carried from the sawmill to its end by the diverted waters from Mill City Creek.

The further the flume progressed the more men were needed to cut timber to build and maintain it. Not far below the sawmill and diversion dam a rough mountain camp sprung up. Naturally the lumberjacks called it Mill City, while the creek became Mill City Creek, a name it retains to this day. It wasn't long until Mill City had a population of 500 lumberjacks, sawyers, and roughnecks and had a company store, boarding houses, and log cabins, many of which can still be found half hidden by the encroaching forest. Judging from the number of old fashioned whiskey bottles found by relic hunters and the tales of wild times remembered by old-timers, there must have been a well patronized saloon also!

The Hilliard Flume ran from high on Gold Hill down Mill City Creek to the west side of Hayden's Fork of the Bear River, which it followed to near where it was joined by the East Fork. There it crossed to the east side of the river and continued for two miles before starting across the dry sage covered Hilliard Flats towards Hilliard on the railroad, 30 miles from its start. Often it crossed log trestles as high as 16' from the ground to keep it at the

desired grade. 80 tons of square spikes were used in its construction and it was fitted so well that hardly a drop of water leaked from its seams. Its grade was designed so that water flowed through it at 15 miles per hour, carrying logs placed in it at Mill City to Hilliard in only two hours. When the last planks were nailed into place and it began bringing a steady flow of sawlogs and lumber into Hilliard, no one seemed to remember that they had once called it "Sloans Folly"!

So well did the flume do its job that Hilliard soon became a major lumber shipping point on the railroad. In addition to railroad ties, the flume transported thousands of mine props and other timber for the mining camps of Utah and Nevada. At that time most of the mines used charcoal to fire their smelters and the Hilliard area also became a major producer of charcoal. There were 32 beehive shaped roak ^{KULMS} ovens at Hilliard in addition to 4 others at nearby Piedmont and 2 more on Sulphur Creek. A large sawmill was built at Evanston by Jesse Atkinson, where finished lumber was cut for the booming coal camp of Almy nearby, and in only a few years Evanston was rivaling Hilliard in size and business.

With a host of sawmills at its terminus to consume every sawlog and rows of charcoal ovens waiting to devour every scrap of wood left over, lumberjacks at Mill City were kept busy keeping the flume filled to capacity. To feed the voracious appetites of the mills and ovens a second flume 6 miles long known as the Howe Feeder was built up the Stillwater Fork of the Bear River from its junction with Haydens Fork. Logs coming down the Howe Feeder were caught in a millpond and then fed into the main flume. To avoid log jams along

the 56 miles of flame, lookout, were stationed where they could see for miles in each direction. When fog, haze or other trouble threatened they could signal each other by means of a telegraph.

During the years that the Hilliard Flame & Lumber Company prospered, the towns that it supported prospered also. Few records were kept at Mill City but old-timers recalled that it was a tough camp. There was no Forest Service at that time to prevent un-controlled timber cutting and little law enforcement to control the exuberance of its rough lumberjacks. Like any isolated mountain camp with 500 men and no women, but with plenty of whiskey, fights were sure to happen. Hilliard had its share of toughs also, but being on the railroad and nearest to civilization perhaps they were a little more gentlemanly and settled its fights with six-guns instead of axes. But both Mill City and Hilliard were "Sunday School" settlements compared to Bear Town. Located on Sulphur Creek south of Evanston, Bear Town was the devils delight!

Bear Town was born as Gilmer in 1867 as a rough camp of tie cutters for the railroad. With the arrival of the iron rails and the coming of sawmills, lumberjacks, saloons, and painted women, Bear Town became one of the west's worst hell-holes. From a rough shanty town it literally exploded into a town of 2,000 roughnecks, outlaws, confidence men, and camp followers. What law there was then ended at the Missouri and Bear Town was beyond the law. Robberies and murders in broad daylight became commonplace and its gambling halls and saloons never closed.

Finally in desperation its law abiding citizens, which at

best were few in number, organized as vigilantes to stop the violence. They hung three of the worst outlaws as a warning, but apparently it had little effect for if anything the robberies and murders increased. Before the outlaw element was finally controlled fourteen men had been hung by the vigilantes while twice that number were killed in gunfights. At the rate things were going half the town would have killed the other half off if the rail-head hadn't moved further west. With the railroads westward movement the camp followers left for the next end of line camp and about a year later the rails were re-routed several miles to the north. Hilliard and Mill City attracted most of the legitimate citizens, ^{and} ~~and~~ only a year after its hectic birth Bear Town was a ghost town.

During the next few years, demand for railroad ties lessened and coal from newly found deposits replaced charcoal at most of the mines. Gradually the great forests at the head of the Bear River fell before the woodsmans axe and the sawmills began closing. In 1885 the last mill whistle sounded and the great flume lay idle. Several years later an eastern company purchased it, but its new owners soon discovered that the best timber had been cut and once more the flume was abandoned.

But even after years of use and making a fortune for its owners it wasn't allowed to die peacefully. Its heavy planking was salvaged and taken to Hilliard and Evanston where buildings and homes were built from it that are still in use. ~~and~~ Today Hilliard is only a group of weathered ranch buildings while Evanston, which was once its suburb, is a first class city. The rotting

diversion dam and a few sagging cabins are all that is left at Mill City and only memories of Bear Town remain.

Today a quiet walk through the silent pines and Aspens along Mill City Creek will reveal log cribbings and trestles over which the Hilliard Flume once ran. A line of rusting square spikes still marks its course where a careful searcher may still find a forgotten broad axe or perhaps a purpled bottle. And if you listen closely, the sigh of the wind in the pines sounds almost like the rush of water carrying logs down the great Hilliard Flume.

-by Geo A. Thompson
of Park City, Utah
& Layton, Utah

